

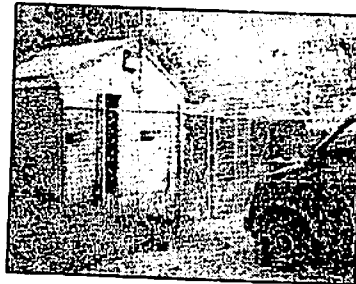
Duxbury Clipper

New Digs for Duxbury's Dogs and Cats

By TIFFANY FRANKE

For nearly 20 years, stray pets in Duxbury that have been picked up by the Animal Control Officer have been taken to the shelter behind the DPW facilities. The small, windowless cement structure, with two dog runs, a makeshift cat cage and small desk present "unhealthy conditions for the animals and a far from suitable working environment for Control Officer Matt Riggins," said Director of Public Works Tom Daley.

Lieutenant Roger Banfill, Daley, Annie Eldridge and the



Duxbury's current animal shelter.

members of her committee, the Friends of the Duxbury Animal Shelter, have been working to raise funds and lay plans for a new shelter in a wooded plot of land behind

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the town offices and the First Parish Church. The \$75,000 allotted from the town, combined with the funds raised by Eldridge's group, provides a total of \$184,000 for the project. Daley plans to survey the land this week before finalizing the site design and meeting with the group to discuss modifications before going to bid. He hopes to set the concrete before the ground freezes, and open the shelter in spring, 2004.

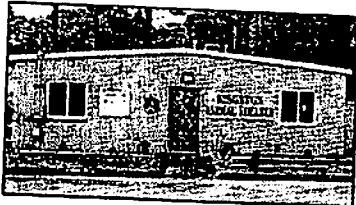
The current 12 by 12 foot shelter temporarily houses any of Duxbury's 1,500 licensed dogs and cats that wander astray. One poorly lit room houses Riggins's office and all of the animals in three small, dark runs. The facility lacks a bathroom, proper ventilation and A/C system, storage space, a computer, and an area for meeting with visitors. "There's not enough space in general," said Daley, "and the temperature control is awful. It's too hot in the summer, and too cold in the winter." Because the shelter does not have the capacity to hold animals on a long term basis, the pets are sent to the Pembroke Animal League after two weeks of being held, where they are eligible for adoption, but often end up being put to sleep.

"A new shelter is a necessity, not a luxury, and we encourage anyone who questions this to visit the existing facility," said Eldridge, who started the Friends of the Duxbury Animal Shelter Committee in June, 2002. "We realize these have been fiscally very challenging times, and the town needed outside support to make the project happen." Having raised \$109,000, a majority of the funds for the project, the group of ten volunteers hopes to actively participate in the building and operation of the shelter. "We've put our necks on the line to raise this money, and feel that it's our responsibility to the donors to stay involved through the building process," said Eldridge, "but as of now we have no authority."

The group has proposed a building committee including members Bob Lonadier, Susan Curtis and John Baldwin, each with building expertise, to help oversee construction. "We don't want anyone to think that the town's money was mis-spent," said Eldridge.

An estimated \$128,000 will go into the building structure itself, leaving the rest for site, utility, and septic preparation. The Department of Public Works will be donating an estimated \$28,500 of in-house services including the clearing of trees and installation of water. "We're committed to building a very economical, low maintenance, long-term facility within the budget," said Daley.

Although it will be nearly



The Duxbury animal shelter will be a modified version of the new Kingston facility.

nine times larger than the existing structure, the new shelter will be a smaller and slightly modified version of the new Kingston facility. A modular metal building placed on a cement foundation will consist of an indoor/outdoor dog room with six runs, a cat room with space for a quarantine facility, utility room, office, and food storage room. In order to avoid the same pitfalls that caused Kingston to go over budget in their project, committee members Curtis and Baldwin met with Kingston Animal Control Officer, Debbie Muller, to discuss building ideas. "It's the little stuff that makes a difference in the long run," said Curtis, "like the importance of including a window on the door of the cat room, pitching the floor at the right angle so that messes can more easily be washed into the drain, and including a roof overhang so that people can get out of the building when there's snow." Curtis thought that one of Kingston's biggest mistakes was not involving Muller who

is very knowledgeable about animals and their needs in a shelter, in the decision-making process. "If we get involved up front, maybe we can nip some of these things in the bud and save money in the long run," Curtis continued.

Because the current budget will not afford some of these minor details, or "luxury items" such as a washing machine and extra beds, Eldridge's committee has offered to lead further fund raising efforts to make them possible. "We're not trying to build a 'doggie Taj Majal,'" joked Eldridge, "only trying to make a clean, comfortable place for the animals and employees." The town has set up a special account for all donations, and a wish list of desired items, so that people may contribute more than just money to the efforts. Once the new shelter opens, Eldridge hopes that dedicated animal lovers will be able to donate their time as part of a network of caring volunteers. Because the new shelter will have a greater capacity and better facilities, adoption of unclaimed animals may be a future alternative to sending the animals to the Pembroke Rescue League.

About the committee, Daley said, "they have been spurring the charge to get it done, and now everyone's contributing to make it happen."